IDW

#16

SAM KIETH • WILLIAM MESSNER-LOEBS

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THE MAXX

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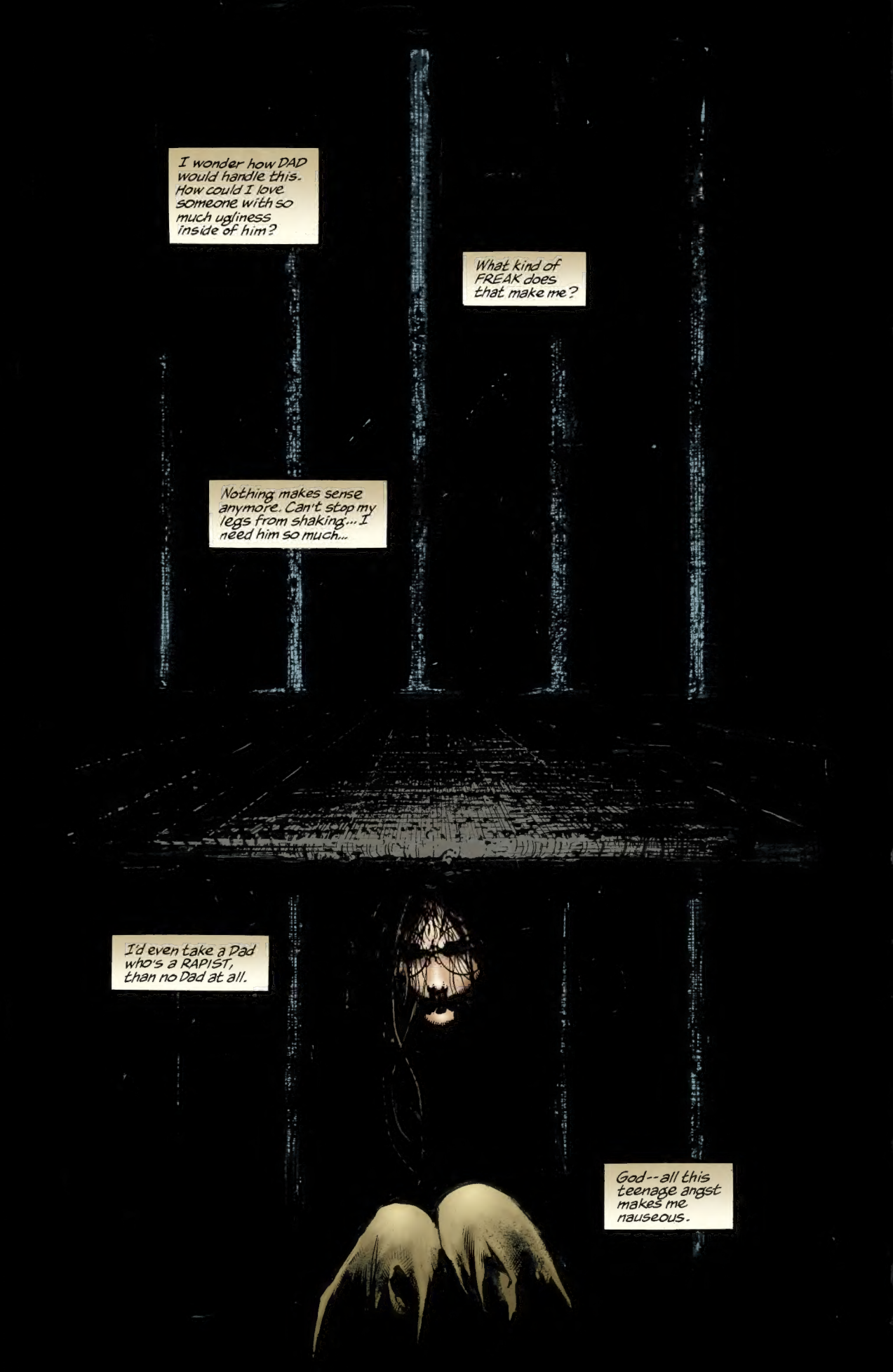
How the hell did I wind up here?
Looks like that creepy little dude in the corner's not gonna be any TROUBLE, at least. Those have got to be the largest SNEAKERS I've ever seen.
That's right, little creep-- you just sit there and pick your nose and stay the hell away from me.


I wonder how DAD would handle this. How could I love someone with so much ugliness inside of him?
What kind of FREAK does that make me?
Nothing makes sense anymore. Can't stop my legs from shaking... I need him so much...
I'd even take a Dad who's a RAPIST, than no Dad at all.
God--all this teenage angst makes me nauseous.

How much worse can it get? I'm in jail for the night. I'd better not turn my back on the little guy with big feet. I've truly hit bottom, I'm in...
HEY LADY.
THE NAME'S FRIDGE.
YOU KNOW THAT LITTLE GUY ACROSS FROM YOU? HE'S NOT LIKE US. HE'S NOT EVEN HUMAN. THAT THING ATE THE LAST TWO GUYS IN HERE. IT LOOKS HUMAN, BUT IT'S NOT.
YEAH, RIGHT. GIMME A BREAK.
BEFORE THE NIGHT'S OVER, YOU'LL KNOW...

It took most of the night to push that old freak's threats out of my mind...
...and about a second for it all to come...
...back.
WHY YOU LITTLE...
:SNICKER:
SHUT UP!

I LOVE THIS FRIGGIN' SONG. IT'S GREAT. IT'S ABOUT THIS WOMAN WHO TELLS THIS HOUSEWIFE ABOUT...
I'VE *HEARD* IT. IT MAKES ME *ILL*.
THEN I'LL TURN IT UP NICE AND LOUD, JUST FOR YOU.
YOU KNOW WHAT PARADISE IS? IT'S AN ILLUSION. YOU KNOW WHAT REALITY IS? IT'S YOUR HUSBAND, THE SAME ONE YOU'RE GOING TO MAKE LOVE TO TONIGHT. THAT'S BEAUTY. THAT'S TRUTH.
O.K. I'm still in jail, the little creep is still in the corner, but now he's movin' in, and this jerk is forcing me to listen to the worst song in the world. How did I get here?
A mere 24 hours ago, everything was...

...clear.
. . . . . .CLICK.
WOW! SO THAT'S IT. THIS TAPE EXPLAINS IT ALL. DAD KNEW EVERYTHING, AND NOW I'VE GOT TO TELL THEM BOTH.

The first one I went to was Maxx. There wasn't much time, and Maxx was our only chance. Julie was still in la-la land.
Well, I didn't need the tape to tell me that.
HEY, UNCLE EDDIE! THAT CHICK'S GONNA RAT OUT OUR TAGGING!
GOLLY-- THAT'S UNFAIR. LET'S SKEEDADDLE!
FFSSSSSS
The taggers took off when I came to Maxx's alley, and like an idiot, I picked up the can.
FREEZE!
was the cliché the cops chose.
I left my one phone call on my mom's answering machine. Sooner or later she's bound to get it... it's the LATER I worry about.

Jesus! He must have the damn thing on repeat. It's a special form of hell, listening to the same song over and over, let alone one as bad as this.
Even though Fridge is sitting up, I can still hear him snoring. But the snoring guy in the next cell is the least of my worries.
It's the silent one in front of me that's got me creeped out.

So if he has bad enough taste to want to eat ME...
...maybe he can stomach this music.
BONK!
CRUNCH!
...GONNA MAKE LOVE TO TONIGHT...

Well, great. Solves one problem, creates another. Now I get to hear a Muppet version coming out of his stomach.
HEY, WHERE'S MY HEADPHONES?
STOW IT, JOLLY BOY.
At least he's asleep now. Dad's tape said these little guys are blind as bats. They feel and sniff their prey. Since I can't tie his hands...
...these cigarette butts...
...will have to serve as noseplugs.
Hey, cool! They muffle the sound, too!

WELL, KID, YA DONE PRETTY GOOD, SO FAR.
THE OTHER TWO GUYS DIDN'T LAST THIS LONG. I STILL OUGHTA MESS YOU UP FOR TRASHIN' MY DISC PLAYER AND HEADPHONES LIKE DAT.
I'M SHAKIN'.
TELL YA WHAT, KID. THAT THING'S STILL WORKIN' INSIDE. GET YOUR HANDS ON A GOOD SHANK, AND YOU COULD CUT 'IM OPEN. SOLVE BOTH OUR PROBLEMS.
'S'N'OL' MAGAZINE, LADIES' HOME JOURNAL, I THINK.
GREAT. IF I HAD A SHANK.
THE ANSWER'S RIGHT UNDER YOUR BUTT.
IT'S BEEN SOAKED, DRIED AND TWISTED TO A POINT. JUST ONE THING, KID--YOU SURE THEY CAN'T HEAR?
YOU KNOW, I JUST DON'T CARE!

SHE'S GONE. THEY MUST'VE LET HER OUT WHILE YOU WERE SLEEPING.
YOU LEAP TO YOUR FEET AND THE FIRST THING YOU REALIZE IS...
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF
...NOT ONLY IS SHE GONE, BUT EVERYTHING IS.

THERE'S NOT A SMELL IN THE WHOLE PLACE. SO YOU FEEL...
SNIFF SNIFF
...UNDER YOUR BUNK...
SNIFF SNIFF
...JUST TO MAKE SURE.
NOTHING.
SO YOU CHECK HER SIDE, FEELING EVERY SQUARE INCH UNDERNEATH.
EVEN THE UPPER BUNK. BUT STILL...
...EMPTY.

BUT YOU'RE STILL HUNGRY, AND WHO KNOWS HOW LONG IT'S GONNA BE BEFORE THEY BRING SOMEBODY ELSE IN.
COULD BE HOURS...
...OR DAYS.
FRIDGE DOESN'T EXACTLY FIT THROUGH THE BARS.
NOT ALL AT ONCE, ANYWAY.
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP
CHOMP

YOU COME BACK TO THE ONLY PLACE YOU'RE SAFE.
THE ONLY PLACE YOU HAVEN'T SEARCHED.
AND SHE WAS RIGHT THERE THE WHOLE TIME.
POP!
shhhhh
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF
EEEEPP!

I figured Fridge wasn't going to be needing the CD player anymore. So I left it in.

So that's how I got here. Mom was pretty cool. She didn't give me too hard a time. I think she figured I must've had a pretty rough night.
And I was gonna take every inch of slack she gave.
It's funny, but it was something my dad said on the tape that saved me. I guess Dad's not the only one with ugliness inside him. Maybe sometimes you have to be ugly...
...to survive.